

DRIED MELONS & THE CITY & RUINS OF BALC ≠ MARCO POLO

V L city which is called Sapurgan. It is a town beautiful & great & fertile & of great plenty  
R TA L of all things needful for life. It is a land of many trees. And I tell you that among other  
V P things there are found the best pumpkins which the common people call melons in the world  
TA LT and in the greatest quantity, which they have dried and keep them through the whole  
V P year in this way. For when they are dried they cut them in slices all round like threads  
LT VA or strips of leather, or as gourds are usually cut for keeping; then they put them in  
the sun and make them dry, and they become sweeter than honey. And I tell you  
L that they make merchandise of them and they go selling them dried like this through  
P P the neighbouring country in great plenty and they are very acceptable to the people for food  
LT and because they have the sweetness of honey. There are in that country many birds and beasts  
Z of different kinds. And there is hunting of beasts and fowling of birds beyond measure,  
Z FB FB and many other things. Now we will leave speaking to you of this town & will tell  
VA you of another city. When one departs from that country he finds a city which has Balc  
for name.

LT V **H**ERE HE TELLS OF THE GREAT AND NOBLE CITY OF BALC. Balc is a noble  
city and great; and formerly it was more noble and greater enough  
Z Z than it is to day, the largest & most beautiful found in those parts. For the  
Tartars and other people [19d] have often ravaged and wickedly damaged it. For I  
tell you that there were before many beautiful palaces and many beautiful houses  
VA of marble of many fashions, and they still exist destroyed and ruined. Moreover  
V L I tell you that in this city the king Alexandre the Great took the daughter of Darius  
L V king of the Persians to wife, according to what they of that city told them. But all  
LT P the people of this city worship the abominable Mahomet. Moreover you may know  
VA V V that the rule & the land of the great Can, that is of the lord of all the Tartars of the  
VB lands of the sunrising, lasts up to this city, and at this town are the borders of Persie  
between the Greek wind and sunrising.<sup>1</sup> Now let us leave you this city and we  
V will go on to tell you of another land which is called Dogava. And when one departs  
V from this city of which I have told you above he rides quite twelve<sup>2</sup> days journey  
VA V between sunrising & the Greek wind where one finds no inhabited dwelling, and this  
LT VA because the people have forsaken the whole plain and are all fled and retired to the  
P mountains in strongholds for fear of the evil people, robbers, & bandits, and of the  
Z armies which did them much harm & loss many times, as they marched continually  
VB through the country. Those regions are wasted, & one cannot well travel but with a great

<sup>1</sup> P: ex parte aquilonari terminatur . . . inter plagam aquilonarem et orientalem itur

<sup>2</sup> FA,FB,TA,Z: "twelve" LT,P,R: "two" VA: do (three times).